

Report:

II Cornell-IDS-Sussex PhD Symposium on Development

Ithaca, N.Y., 5th October 2016

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Summary:

As part of the partnership between the University of Sussex, the Institute of Development Studies and Cornell University, the II Cornell-IDS-Sussex PhD Symposium took place in Ithaca, N.Y., on the 5th of October 2016. On the occasion, eight PhD researchers had the opportunity to present papers and receive feedback from each other and Sussex and Cornell faculty.

The Symposium unfolded in a friendly and supportive atmosphere. Each participant had 15 minutes for a short presentation, followed by 15 minutes of discussion. Since the papers were circulated in advance, the presentations could concentrate on specific aspects on which the participants wanted feedback. Despite the wide range of research interests, theoretical perspectives and methodologies, the discussions were detailed and meaningful, offering to the participants concrete ways to improve their work and their presentation skills.

The Symposium was held one day before a major conference organised by the Department of Development Sociology at Cornell and sponsored by American Sociological Association ('Development in Question' 6th-8th October). Hundreds of Development Studies researchers from tens of international institutions were attracted to Cornell University. The occasion represented a unique networking opportunity for early career researchers. It was interesting to notice that the Cornell-Sussex partnership and our Symposium were held in the highest consideration by the Development Studies community at large.

The contact between participants was strengthened by the accommodation scheme organised by the Cornell University. Each presenter from the University of Sussex was hosted by a colleague from Cornell, thereby reducing accommodation costs and guaranteeing that each visitor would have at least one strong point of contact within the local academic community.

After the last presentation in the Symposium, a quick feedback session was presided by Professor Fouad Makki. Participants reported having had a positive experience and explored future possibilities of collaboration (see below). In short, the Symposium was extremely useful to the PhD researchers taking part on it and can be considered successful in its purpose of strengthen the Cornell-IDS-Sussex partnership.

Participants and paper titles:

Antunes de Oliveira, Felipe, (International Relations - Sussex)

Uneven and Combined Development and the Development-Underdevelopment Opposition

Ahmed, Nabeela (Geography/Migration Studies - Sussex)

Mobile people, Immobile Structures - a Study of Labour Migrants in India and Access to Social Protection

Galeana Rodriguez, Fernando (Cornell)

Becoming Administrators: Indigeneity, Recognition, and the Co-Production of Space in the Honduran Muskitia

Gioacchino, Gioel, (IDS)

Organizational Buen Vivir

Kato, Tamahi, (IDS)

Agricultural Input Subsidies in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Case of Tanzania

Mwangulube, Wezi, (School of Education and Social Work - Sussex)

Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) for Resource Constraint Contexts

Sharma, Divya, (Cornell)

The Making and Unmaking of the 'Progressive Farmer' in post-'Green Revolution' Punjab, India

Wood, Rachel Godfrey, (IDS)

The Coercive Side of Collective Capabilities: Evidence from the Bolivian Altiplano

Participant faculty:

Dr. Ben Selwyn (Sussex)

Professor Fouad Makki (Cornell)

Dr. Rachel Bezner-Kerr (Cornell)

Dr. Wendy Wolford (Cornell)

Perspectives for future collaboration:

At the end of the Symposium, the participants had the opportunity to discuss ways to strengthen our collaboration. Professor Fouad Makki started this last session by reaffirming that the partnership between Cornell University and the University of Sussex is basically an open framework under which concrete initiatives can be proposed by researchers at both sides of the Atlantic. PhD researchers mentioned the possible interest of spending some time doing courses or research activities at the partner institution. Participants decided to keep the e-mail list created for the symposium as a means to circulate information that may be of interest for the group. Finally, PhD researchers from Sussex mentioned the interest of organising the III Cornell-IDS-Sussex Symposium at the University of Sussex in 2017.

Annex I – Symposium program

Fall 2016 Cornell-IDS-Sussex PhD Symposium

Wednesday October 5th, 2016

Venue: Warren Hall 130

The purpose of this Symposium is to provide PhD students from the University of Sussex, Cornell University and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) with a unique opportunity to get feedback on their research and strengthen the institutional collaboration. There will be nine papers, all in the broad field of Development Studies, presented by Doctoral Candidates from Sussex, Cornell and IDS. Each paper will have a 10-minute presentation plus 20 minutes for feedback and discussion.

Since everyone will have read your paper in advance, your presentation should concentrate on providing a clear and succinct exposition of the argument, its significance in relation to the relevant literature, and any areas on which you especially want feedback. This will be a friendly, supportive environment that provides an excellent opportunity to practice your communication skills – so make the most of it! The room will have a projector for PowerPoint presentations if you need it.

Please send your paper for circulation to Ryan Nehring (rln53@cornell.edu) by September 28th at the latest. The papers will be put in a dropbox folder and accessible to all participants – please read them all and prepare comments!

Program

Welcome and Introductions: 10:00-10:30

Session 1: 10:30 – 12:15

Mwangulube, Wezi, (School of Education and Social Work)

Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) for Resource Constraint Contexts

Ahmed, Nabeela (Geography/Migration Studies)

Mobile people, Immobile Structures - a Study of Labour Migrants in India and Access to Social Protection

Wood, Rachel Godfrey, (IDS)

The Coercive Side of Collective Capabilities: Evidence from the Bolivian Altiplano

Lunch: 12:30-1:30

Session 2: 13:45-15:00

Fernando Galeana Rodriguez (Cornell)

Becoming Administrators: Indigeneity, Recognition, and the Co-Production of Space in the Honduran Muskitia

Kato, Tamahi, (IDS)

Agricultural Input Subsidies in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Case of Tanzania

Sharma, Divya, (Cornell)

The Making and Unmaking of the 'Progressive Farmer' in post-'Green Revolution' Punjab, India

Coffee: 15:15-15:45

Session 3: 16:00-17:15

Gioacchino, Gioel, (IDS)

Organizational *Buen Vivir*

Antunes de Oliveira, Felipe, (Dept of International Relations)

Uneven and Combined Development and the Development-Underdevelopment Opposition

Dinner in downtown Ithaca (Taste of Thai)

Annex II – Pictures of the participants



Annex III – Blog post by Gioel Gioacchino (IDS PhD Researcher)

<https://gioelgio.wordpress.com/2016/10/07/can-we-cut-potatoes-together-does-it-matter/>

Can we cut potatoes together? Does the ‘how’ matter?

Date: October 7, 2016 Author: gioelgio Category: moments, Reflections, Uncategorized Tags: buen vivir, cornell conference, questioning development, Research

Post navigation

← Walk with our utopia

Dear Kirsten,

This morning I ran. I woke up at 7.40 am, and ran along the streets of Ithaca. Big north american streets felt surprisingly familiar. The air in Ithaca is fresher than in Medellin. I spent the morning walking around, taking in the blue sky, hanging out with a bunch of jolly Phd students thirsty of a kind sun. When Wezi, my sparkly Malawian roommate, took this photo, we were by the waterfalls. I was in a space of intimacy with myself.

I think I was not ready for the conference this afternoon. I was flooded with a sense of deep disconnect with what was happening around me. I felt no interest in small talking, and I could almost visualize the parallel dimensions of awareness that people were bringing to their presentation. Big rooms, big panels, big egos, big words. Words. Words, words, words. Sophisticated sentences punctuated by Howevers and Thus, different degrees of excitements about ideas – when you are lucky you’d be able to see the replay of that moment of epiphany, maybe many accumulated moments – in which ideas, stories, and theories got connected. And became words. Words that could be right, or wrong, or both – But words which very rarely reached my heart. Which rarely moved me.

One of the panelists talked about Buen Vivir. I thought her presentation was SO good- the presenter was from Bolivia, a young professor at the University of Cologne – She was no bullshit. Her main point was: we are done with the colonial idea that Westerners have to teach uncivilized Indios. Buen Vivir is a powerful cosmology, and we need to communicate at an equal level so you can check out what indigenous have to teach ya.

She stressed the value of human relationship in the development process with an example from her field work. She mentioned she was preparing potatoes with a group of women and they made a comment about the way she was cutting potato. They noticed she was cutting fast, trying to be efficient. They explained that there is a ritual to cutting potatoes, that the act had a deeper significance, beyond the cooking. It game me a flashback of a this powerful moment I had in Palestine, in a simple day I knew I was not going to forget. Later on, I was debriefing the day with a PhD student at Sussex who comes from the leftist tradition in Brazil. He said that he found the talk interesting even though ‘it did not speak to him’. I asked why.

He mentioned that the speaker had not mentioned why these potatoes were a big deal. Isn't it maybe a sort of romantic notion of exoticizing the simple? Wasn't this a case of labour exploitation? Where they being exploited by their husbands to cook? Anyways, his point was: ok, they are cutting potatoes together, so what? I said that without cutting potatoes you can't eat, so probably they were preparing a meal together. In any case, the speaker did mention what was the point of the potatoes story – she mentioned that potatoes are alive and give them nutrients, and the women treat them with respect, with revelation almost – so the point was to feel the potato, to thank it. The problem is, I told him, that you did not hear it, because to you that does not necessarily make sense – it's not fitting with the debates you are thinking about.

He said: I get your point – but if she wanted to feel the potatoes, maybe she should have asked us to cut potatoes together, rather than speaking at a conference.

So true!

My question at this panel was: if we are acknowledging that we are one, that we are part of an alive universe, and deeply energetically connected – why are we sitting in this big panel? Why do we care about what we think more than what we are? Why do we 'discuss' rather than 'connect'? Basically, what I end up thinking after most conferences □

So what's on my mind is how powerful tools like experiential learning and participatory action research can be. Can we cut potatoes together in a conference on Questioning Development?

We can't change the world if we keep talking about it while doing things that replicate a way of seeing the world which embodies all of the bullshit we live in.

This exchange with my Phd colleague was powerful, and I felt I was able to communicate emphatically – but for the rest of the evening I mostly got taken away by a deep sense of sadness.

I was not too attached to it – I observed it. I was surrounded by all these big academics. I tried to imagine myself amongst them, and I could not.

Or maybe, I could perceive how much energy it would take, and how hard it is to explore what a good life might be about, while packaging it in a defensible theory.

Well, this is the end of my rant. My roommates are sleeping already.

I hope you are spinning with some talented salsa dancer. I hope that you are feeling good, that you are enjoying your time, and that u feel whole.

i love u,

Gioel